

My name is Caitlin Valley, this is my written testimony for House Bill 110. I live in Elyria, Ohio, and have so for the entirety of my life. I am a parishioner at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Elyria. I am a mother of three girls who all attend Catholic school and participate in our parish. My oldest Keira, is in 8th grade at St. Jude's, participates in the youth group at St. Mary's and before COVID-19 served as an alter server at St. Jude's in Elyria during school masses. She has also participated since third grade in CYO volleyball and now CYO tennis. My middle daughter, Fiona, is in 6th grade. She is an alter server at St. Mary's and attends St. Jude School. My youngest, Mackenna, also attends school at St. Jude's in Elyria with her sisters and is in 1st grade.

I am writing to you about the unfairness of the current scholarship situation for students who have continuously attended a Catholic school, never a public school. My two oldest both would be attending Eastern Heights Jr. High School in Elyria this year if they attended public school. Next year my oldest would-be attending Elyria High School. Both the Jr. high and high school in our school district have a failing rating by the state's standards.

My children have attended Catholic school since my oldest was in Kindergarten. My oldest Keira was never eligible for the EdChoice option we were told. Fiona was when she entered Kindergarten due to my husband's and mine financial situation at the time though. Fiona continued to be eligible up until last year for the entirety of the scholarship but Mackenna the youngest was not since we surpassed the 200% poverty required by the EdChoice Expansion grant by the time she entered Kindergarten.

Keira has been receiving the John Peterson Scholarship the last few years through St. Jude due to her being on an IEP and receiving services. Her tuition has been covered entirely while she has been at St. Jude's. Next year, she will be going to Elyria Catholic. The John Peterson Scholarship drops from close to \$10,000 to \$2,500 for high school; and because she has been attending a Catholic school since Kindergarten, she is not eligible for her tuition to be completely covered under the standard EdChoice scholarship. Even though, again, the public school she would have attended meets the standards that she would be eligible if she never attended a Catholic school before.

For the 2021-2022 school year, the threshold was changed for the EdChoice Expansion scholarship to help students who fell into the 200-250% of the poverty range. My husband and I sit at 233% meaning all three are eligible for something, but Keira's tuition will still exceed the amount she will be offered with the expansion scholarship and we will still owe \$2900.

What is frustrating is that any student attending Elyria Public Schools set to go to Elyria High or Eastern Heights Jr. High right now would be automatically eligible to go to St. Jude's, St. Mary's or Elyria Catholic in our city and owe nothing if they filed an EdChoice Scholarship. It does not matter if they are not Catholic, not active in the Catholic community or their parents make more than the 250% for the EdChoice Expansion. They have a right as public-school students attending a failing school to seek other educational opportunities. But because we chose a Catholic education for our children from the beginning, they are not eligible for the same consideration.

The system is broken. My children should be afforded the same consideration of educational choice and opportunity as other students in their district without my husband and I struggling financially to give them the same opportunities non-Catholic children in our district get automatically. We believe deeply in Catholic education and that our children have grown in their faith and as people by being educated in the Catholic school system. We are only asking that you consider the fact that we are seemingly being punished for our faith-based educational choice from the beginning for our children's education now while their peers in public school will be afforded the opportunity to attend a Catholic school at no cost because their parents chose public education for the first six years of education for them.